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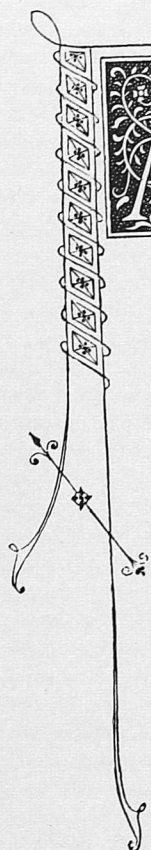
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# THE NEEDLE

## ALTAR HANGINGS.



SERIES of designs for church hangings for use on Trinity Sunday, and for the seasons when green is used, is begun in the present number (see supplement pages). The silk used for the

foundation of the altar antependium is generally woven with a design, and for green this is especially advisable, as it is a color which is not generally very satisfactory on a plain surface. The superfrontal will look richer if of velvet of a green of slightly darker tone; or, if preferred, it may be worked on plain gros-grain silk, as the surface exposed will be less than on the frontal. The medallion in the centre is intended to be of a very dark red-ribbed silk—not the ecclesiastical red used for altar

hangings, but something much more sombre; and the border of conventional fleurs-de-lis surrounding it of velvet of the same deep tone of red, almost maroon. The design for the medallion should be marked out on the silk, which should be previously backed, in the manner frequently described in these pages, with a linen affording sufficient steadiness to hold the heavy gold work; and the velvet, which has been also previously backed by pasting, as also previously described, having been marked out, the fleurs-de-lis must be cut out with sharp scissors and fixed in their places by pins, and then sewn down firmly all along the edges, as directed for velvet appliqué. It will be best to arrange this ornament round the edge of the medallion first, extending the base of the fleurs a little beyond the design, as it appears when finished, so as to give greater firmness in sewing them on to the linen, which, of course, has been previously tightly and carefully framed. The silk must now be pinned down with the greatest care and sewn over with the finest herring-bone stitch over the bases of the fleurs-de-lis. The cross, the crown, and the Alpha and Omega must now be worked separately upon stout linen. They should be all traced at once, so that one operation of framing will be sufficient. Within the outline of the cross a second outline must be traced at a distance of about half an inch; this space is to be filled in with couplings of dead gold-colored silk laid closely side by side, and stitched across at regular intervals by silk of the same color, or slightly darker in tint. These stitchings across may either be done by laying threads across the couched lines at regular intervals, or by simple stitchings, as preferred; but great care should be taken with the intersections at the arms and outside corners of the cross. This being completed, the centre is to be worked in brick-stitch, the gold threads being laid down two at a time and fastened with a stitch at right angles of red twist silk, not too coarse. The

stitchings across alternate; those in the second line coming exactly half way between those of the first, so as to give the appearance of brick-work. Here also great neatness will be required in laying the gold threads at the intersections of the cross. They ought to be "passing" and not Japanese gold, so that they may be carried through the linen, and thus more neatly finished. If expense is a great object, and real gold thread cannot be used, very fine Japanese gold must be used, and four threads in place of two taken for each line of brick, as the

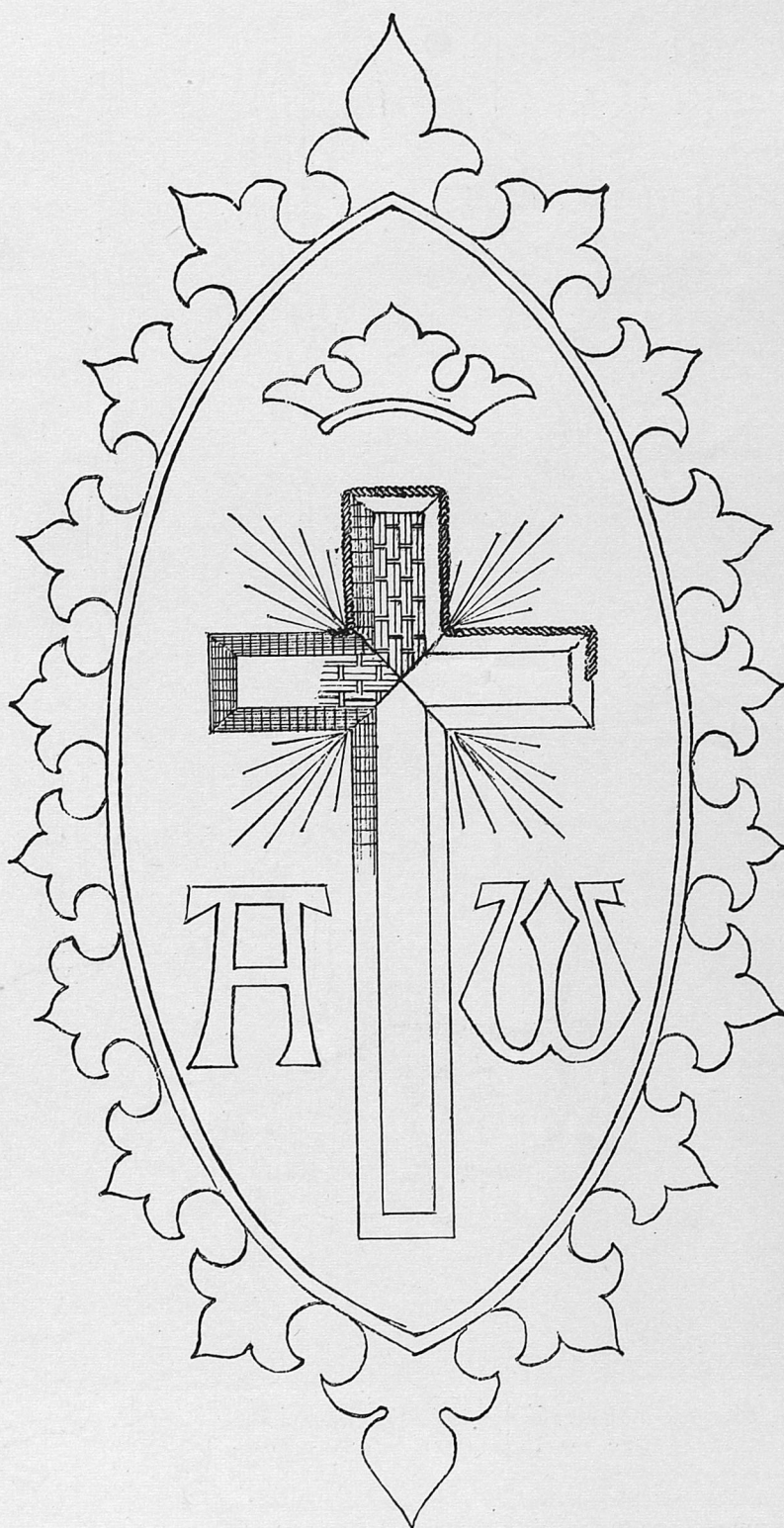
using brick-stitch of gold thread only. The crown might be enriched with jewels worked in satin-stitch of silk, in red and green, at the base, between two thick lines of gold thread stitched down. The crown itself would probably look richest if worked in feather-stitch in silk, radiating outward toward the top, and then enriched in the centre of each leaf with gold thread worked over the silk. When these detached ornaments are all finished they must be well pasted at the back, and left till quite dry; then cut out, leaving a very narrow margin beyond the gold, and applied on the medallion of red silk, which has been already prepared for them. When the whole have been firmly sewn on over the edges, the rays springing from the cross must be couched in with gold thread, and then each portion of the design finished with a couched line of gold cord sewn down with red silk. An outer couching of dark red chenille will add great richness and throw up the ornament with very good effect. The fleurs-de-lis must not be finished until the whole of the medallion is applied to the frontal, which is best done after the rest of the design has been worked, the exact position of the medallion being marked on the silk at the same time that the rest of the design is traced.

The frontal should not need backing if the silk is a good one, but if it is at all thin it will certainly be necessary. The stalk running throughout the design should be worked in shades of gold-colored silk toning into bronze green and browns, the thorns being of the golden hue; the same silks may be used for the buds and for the calyx leaflets showing behind the roses. The whole of the foliage should be outlined with gold thread or with a couching of thick gold-colored silk; the former will be most effective, the leaves themselves worked with couching of fine Japanese gold thread or gold-colored silk laid across in straight lines, leaving sufficient space between each thread for the ground to be distinctly seen through. If worked with silk, veinings of gold thread should be worked on after the leaf is finished.

The roses must be worked in feather-stitch of silk in tones of red, not too deep, and inclining as much as possible to a broken hue of terra-cotta. The choice of this shade must depend on the red used for the ground and appliqué of the centre medallion; but the ecclesiastical green being rather a strong one, it will be necessary, in selecting the light reds to be used for the flowers, to take into consideration the golds and bronzes used in the foliage, and the deep reds used in the medallion. In a design so purely conventional as this, the spent seeds of the roses may be worked in red or pinkish tones if the harmony seems to require it, though they should properly be of gold color. The seeds must be worked on the roses after the embroidery is finished with gold thread, and may be finished either with small spangles or with French knots of the gold thread.

When the frontal is all finished, the centre must be placed on it before it is unframed, stitched on and couched round the edge of the fleurs-de-lis with gold cord, and, if desired, with an outer couching of dark red chenille to lift it from the ground.

The whole will then be lined with stiff linen and with silk or some other lining, and finished off at the top as previously described, leaving the linen to project an inch or so to fasten on to the altar. The fringe may be of



MEDALLION IN THE TRINITY ALTAR FRONTAL. BY SARAH WYNFIELD RHODES. (SEE SUPPLEMENT.)

THE CROSS IS WORKED IN BRICK-STITCH ON A BED OF SILK COUCHING EDGED WITH CORD.

fine thread is more easy to manage in the turnings than coarse.

In working with Japanese gold, it must always be remembered to give it a twist with the fingers as it is turned, or the paper with which the thread is covered will show a gap.

The Greek letters and the crown should be worked in the same manner, but omitting the silk couplings, and

gold, or if, as is likely, a balance of red is still required, it may be spaced with dark red. A spaced fringe, however, is apt to give a patchy appearance at a little distance, and rarely looks so well as a self-colored one.

It has formerly been remarked that as the fringe is laid upon the frontal, not sewn at the edge, allowance must be made for this, in striking the centre, for placing the medallion and the scroll design midway between the bottom of the fringe of the superfrontal, and the top of that on the cloth itself.

The superfrontal may be worked, as I have said, on plain ribbed silk or even on velvet. The directions for working the frontal will apply to it, but the reds may be a little more marked, certainly working all the buds in deep reds, as we have not the centre medallion to give us relief, as in the frontal. The top of the altar should be of the figured silk used for the ground of the frontal, and if lined with thin linen or Holland it will give it greater substance, and make it wear better.

When making up an altar hanging, especially one for festival use or where much gold is used, a large loose cover in the shape of a bag, which will hold the frontal when rolled loosely or folded flat, should be provided, with a top coming well over and buttoning closely, so as to exclude all dust. A smaller bag or sachet should be made to hold the other hangings. The superfrontal will generally fold in two, and go in with the frontal without injury.

L. HIGGIN.

### EMBROIDERY IN AMERICA.

#### VI.—NEW USES FOR COTTON IN HANGINGS AND ARTISTIC NEEDLEWORK.

"JUST now I confess to be very much interested in cottons," said Mrs. Wheeler. "And it seems to me that there is a certain poetic justice in one being brought at last to recognize their artistic possibilities. Cotton is a native product, and has done so much for the prosperity of the country that it must command our respect; but its proper place in the decorative arts has been overlooked."

"And it is now to have its chance, as silk and flax have had theirs? But how?"

"First in the loom. You know how much has been accomplished in India by producing beautiful tints in that way alone. My associates and I are experimenting just now in what I may call changeable weavings. This is the beginning. For example, we have hangings woven in two tints of blue, light and dark, which give the changeable effect. Then for a half a yard we introduce cream white with the darker blue, dropping the lighter tint. I say cream white; it is, in fact, an iron-rust color, an oxide of iron. This woven band of light is followed by resuming the two tints for a space sufficient to finish the hanging."

"What do you do with your band of cream?"

"That is designed for embroidery in which the warp—that is, the darkest tint—is used as the thread."

"Is it strong enough?"

"I should have said that the fabric has a good deal of body, so that it requires no lining. But although the warp thread is heavy enough and stout enough to use for the embroidery, the fabric is very elastic."

"What do you consider suitable designs for these embroideries?"

"Scroll forms carrying possibly a large flower like the peony, the leaves and stems making the scrolls. These should be all-over designs, and almost cover the ground. The principal thing is that they shall be bold and effective."

"What is the stitch?"

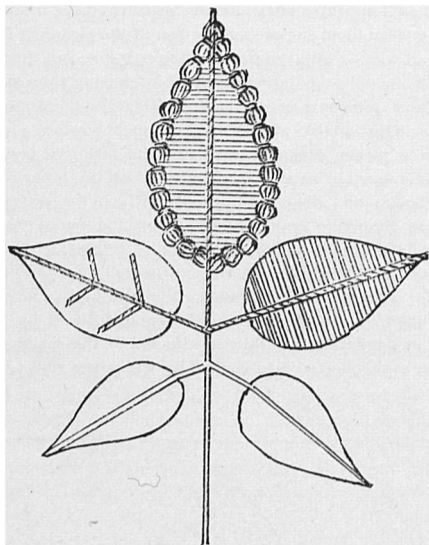
"A long stitch alike on both sides. I particularly insist on this; for they are hangings, as I have said, that will remain unlined, and of course neither side should be unsightly. This care we see in Oriental embroideries, and it gives a certain satisfaction to the mind, as to the eye. In the scroll forms—that is, the leaves and stems—it will not be difficult to represent the continuous lines alike on both sides. Where the flowers are treated solidly it is more difficult. But in this case the outlining and the veining should be so done that they will repre-

sent the design properly, if more lightly, on the wrong side."

"In what other colors will the fabrics appear?"

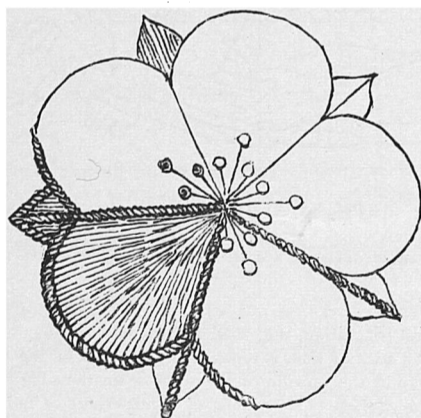
"Reds and buffs; the latter will be the yellow of oxide of iron, which is a perfectly strong color. That the colors should be fast is, of course, the first consideration."

"In looking about for cottons suitable for artistic purposes, we come across some interesting and valuable facts. For one, we find that the Acadians in Louisiana still keep to their traditions in weaving homespun. But, sad to relate, this colony around which Longfellow has shed such romantic glamour *will* use aniline dyes. This is due, of course, to the progress of chemical investigation



DETAIL OF LEAVES ON THE TRINITY ALTAR HANGING.

consequent to the discovery of coal. I'm sure Evangeline never wore magenta, and I'm just as sure that Gabriel was clad in butternut. However, I am glad to say that there is nothing amiss to-day with the looms of their descendants. The Acadians now weave a cotton for hangings that is as heavy as a blanket. It has stripes of crude color; but these people also weave nankeen cotton in the natural colors that are admirable. We have employed them to weave for us a lighter fabric, but of the same nature, suitable for hangings."



DETAIL OF ROSE ON THE TRINITY ALTAR HANGING.

PETALS IN FEATHER STITCH, EDGED WITH CORD. STAMENS FINISHED WITH FRENCH KNOTS.

"How are these to be treated?"

"They are to be covered entirely with darnings of a darker yellow. The work is experimental, but I have great faith in it."

"What will be the forms of the design?"

"They will resemble those of old English brocade. That will be the general character of the work. The fabric will be about evenly distributed between the ground, which includes the darning and the embroidery. The goods so treated will be used for furniture as well as for hangings. The stoutness and durability of the fabric and the quality of the embroidery, no less durable, fit them for any room in constant use. The fact

that they are of cotton will not detract from their dignity—on the contrary, indeed; and, as with the printed ducks and cotton cloths, they will take the place of cheap silks, being superior to them in durability, and otherwise equal to them by virtue of their artistic treatment."

"They are particularly intended, I presume, for country houses?"

"No; they are quite good enough for a city dining-room or library."

"Do you think that the amateur embroiderer can make as judicious use of them as you so confidently predict?"

"Why not? The colors used give very little opportunity to go wrong. Red, blue, buff; tint on tint; blue embroidered with blue, red on red, buff on buff, using as the thread the warp tint—that is, the darker. In fact, I have great hopes that our embroiderers all over the country will be led in this way to see the beauty and effectiveness of monotonies, and put by for a time their efforts to reproduce natural flowers in their infinity of tints and shading. Moreover, the heavy thread rapidly covers the surface to be worked over; the fabrics fringe on themselves, and, knotted, make their own suitable and attractive finish. The only difficulties left are to get bold, well-balanced designs, and to acquire sufficient technical proficiency to present a creditable wrong side of the embroidery."

"While on the subject of cottons, I may mention also the Irish homespun linen, which furnishes a beautiful ground for embroidery that suggests the Indian work on cotton."

"That is done in silks?"

"Yes; in India they use the rough wild silks, but they put much more labor into their work than we would find it profitable to do in this country. But, as I said, this work only suggests the Indian embroideries. In the first place, the color is that Indian or madder red which the Irish peasantry produce with their vegetable dyes, and which was so pleasantly conspicuous in the work from the Donegal industry."

"The designs will be Indian also?"

"Yes; Indian all-over designs worked in yellow silks—deep Indian yellow and of the best quality. But where the Oriental lavishes solid embroidery, it is here expedient to use only outlines, and in floral designs to do a great deal by veining. Of course, here and there a piece of solid embroidery is very telling."

"To enforce the Indian character, it is very well to use gold thread occasionally, and, further, to use spangles. These outlined linens will be very suitable for upholstery in country houses. The gold and spangles may be reserved for use in the draperies."

"Of course I have barely intimated what may be done with cotton and linens. It seems to me this kind of work ought to appeal to American women; not only on account of the cheapness of the fabrics and the broadness of the embroidery, which enables one to cover a large surface in a short time, but because, as I have said, we ought to have a certain national pride in doing what we can with our native products."

M. G. H.

It is only within the past two years that American embroidery silks have been able to substantiate their claims for recognition. The demand for art-shades, or, as they are known among the manufacturers, Asiatic dyes, put the silk spinners to severe tests. Here are not only new and difficult dyes to imitate, but they must be enduring, they must wash—a term not slangy but technical. Manufacturers have been found able to meet these requirements. So successful have been the experiments with the Brainerd and Armstrong brands, for instance, that these silks have taken their place both for colors and fastness among the best that are imported. This is saying a great deal; for embroidery has itself arrived at such artistic perfection that the painter is not more fastidious as to the beauty and permanence of his colors than the needlewoman in regard to her threads. The varieties used in art embroidery are outline, twisted, rope and filling silks, and filoselle. These are all wash silks, and so permanent are the dyes that they will withstand even hot water allied with soap. It should be understood, however, that silks thus guaranteed are sold with a "guarantee wash label," and that the ordinary skein silk not so designated is not warranted. Little color books with the numbered shades of sample silks are issued by the same house, and are so great a convenience for determining just what shades are needed that it is surprising manufacturers have not made larger use of the idea.

